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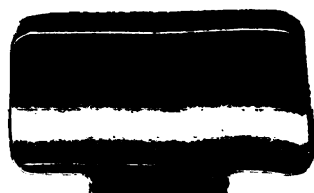
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To
Capt. Robert Rouch
S.Y. "Argonaut"
from the author
in manuscript April 24th 61
May 15th 1907.

HISTORY
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TO SIBERIA.

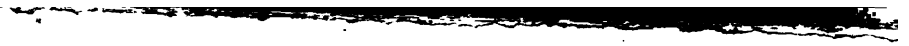
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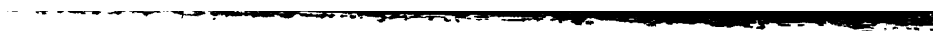
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ALEXANDER KINLOCH.

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HISTORY OF THE
KARA SEA TRADE ROUTE
TO SIBERIA.

INCLUDING
A SUMMARY OF THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE SPECIAL
COMMISSION APPOINTED BY THE MINISTER
OF FINANCE, JANUARY, 1898.

COMPILED AND TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

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PREFACE.

THE object of this little ^{book} ~~monograph~~ is to present a short and unbiassed account of the facts relating to the history of the development of the Northern (or Kara) Sea passage to the mouths of the rivers Ob and Yenissey. It has been compiled from accounts of some of the earliest attempts to discover an important sea route, including the efforts made by various Russian adventurers and capitalists. It is also intended to demonstrate the possibility of the further development of it as a trade route, and at the same time treat of the modern economic conditions of Eastern Siberia, the interests and prosperity of which are so closely connected with such development. On the other hand, it is intended to give the opposite opinions at present prevailing amongst the commercial and industrial communities of Russia with regard to the

iv.

advantages or disadvantages to be anticipated from a regular direct trade intercourse of Siberia with foreign countries by this new or rather this undeveloped sea route, which has been for so long attracting the attention of the shipping and mercantile classes of Europe and of England in particular.

The information on which this account is founded has been derived from the following private and official sources as well as from local reports and accounts: "The Trade and Industrial Gazette," St. Petersburg; "The Yenissey province at the Tricentenary Siberian Jubilee," by *Chudnovsky*, Tomsk, 1885; "History of the Opening of the Sea Route from Europe to the Siberian Rivers and the Shores of Behring Straits," by *Th. Studitsky*, 2 vols., St. Petersburg, 1883; "The Sea Route to Siberia," by *S. Shokalsky*, St. Petersburg, 1893; "The St. Petersburg News," 1898, Nos. 28, 32, and 33; "The Yenisseyits"—The Northern Sea Route, Enissey—(articles which appeared in 1898, No. 8). "Popham's Report;" "The Siberian Trade Journal," 1898, No. 18, with Notes on the Question of the Export of Raw Produce by the

v.

North Sea Route from Siberia; "The Times St. Petersburg correspondent."
"The Press, and other reports of the Conference at the Department of Trade and Manufacture, of the Special Commission appointed by the Ministry of Finance, Jan., 1898."

HISTORY OF THE KARA SEA TRADE ROUTE TO SIBERIA.

I.

VARIOUS EFFORTS TO DISCOVER AND ESTABLISH THE ROUTE.

AS FAR back as the latter part of the XVIth century English and Dutch Arctic sea navigators encountered Russian seafaring men near Novaya Zemlia, Vaygatch island and Jugor strait, making their way, sometimes in whole detachments in their frail coasting crafts to the mouths of the rivers Ob and Yenissey in pursuit of trade. Their route lay along the shores of the north coast of Russia and Siberia as far as the Yalmal peninsula, which they crossed partly by the river Mutnaya and partly by hauling their craft across the headland, to get into the Ob by the little river

Zelënaya. Sometimes they steered their course round the peninsula. To check these traders who went so far as to collect tolls from foreigners, the Government established a station in 1601 at Mangasia, an island about 200 versts above the mouth of the river Taza, flowing into the gulf of the Ob. To this place came Russian traders for barter from the shores of the White Sea, as well as foreigners from distant Europe. In 1616 the license for trading in these seas and further East than Archangel, hitherto granted to foreigners, was withdrawn by Voyevod Kurakin of Tobolsk, and all such traders coming by sea were sent back *via* Bereзов and Tobolsk to Verhotoulsk to prevent loss of customs to the Exchequer. Further restrictive measures in the shape of increased tariffs culminated at last in the total abandonment in 1620 of this trade route by the Russians themselves. And for more than 250 years all trade navigation in the Kara Sea was absolutely relinquished by the Russians, and the Sea itself eventually obtained the reputation of being an impassable field of ice.

The frequent attempts made by foreign explorers to reach Siberia by the Kara

Sea present a more varied and interesting historical record of enterprises. Passing over the first recorded attempt in the Xth century, when Otter, the Norwegian, having rounded North Cape, was the first to penetrate as far as the mouths of the Dvina and Mezen, in the White Sea, also Willoughby and Chancellor's first expedition to Archangel in 1553, we learn that in 1556 the English fitted out a small vessel under the command of Stephen Burrow, who undertook to sail by the North passage to China and the East Indies, and who, according to the testimony of some Russian ships' crews that met him on the way, did reach the shores of Novaya Zemlia and Vaygatch, and made his way as far as the mouth of the Ob. In 1580, two English navigators, Pett and Jackson, were the first Europeans who succeeded in passing into the Kara Sea as far as Kara Bay. In the latter part of the XVth century the Dutch appear on the scene and take the place of the English. Impelled by the same enterprising spirit to discover a North West passage to the "fabulously wealthy" East Indies, William Behrens in 1594 starts from Holland with two ships to the arctic

seas in quest of a passage north of Novaya Zemlia, whilst two other vessels in command of Nay and Tethalis succeeded in making their way through the Kara Gates. Thanks to these navigators the south-west shores of Novaya Zemlia and Vaygatz island were first discovered; and the fact that in August the Kara Sea is entirely free of ice is established. Their announcement that the navigation of the northern seas of Siberia is quite practicable, brought forth another Dutch expedition in 1595, consisting of seven ships under the command of Cornelius Nay. From Russian vessels which he met in the Kara Sea, Nay ascertained that the passage to the Ob and Yenissey presented no unsurmountable difficulties, and that the Kara Sea was as a rule comparatively free of ice at the end of summer.

Behrens and Rip on their voyage of the following year, discovered Bear Island and the Spitsbergen group; but on their return their ships were ice-locked, and they were compelled to winter on Novaya Zemlia. This expedition experienced great hardships, which cost the lives of the greater part of the crews including that of Behrens himself. The expedition established the

fact, however, that the polar ice, even during winter, is in this wide latitude constantly on the move, forming alternating open sheets of water.

The discovery of the Cape route to India checked for a time the enterprising spirit of the north-west pioneers. Yet during the XVIIth century, English, Danish, and Dutch traders continued to make attempts to reach the Eldorado of India by the north-west passage in order to evade the consequences of the extortionate monopoly of the Dutch East India Company. The following expeditions may be mentioned among these attempts: Hudson's in 1608, William Gordon's in 1611, Cornelius Van Horn's in 1612, Cornelius Basman's in 1625, and several others.

Then comes an interval of 60 years. In the reign of the Empress Anna the Russian Government sent out a series of expeditions for making official surveys of the northern shores of Russia and Siberia, from the White Sea to the Taymar peninsula. The reports of these surveys were not considered sufficiently reliable, however, and they have not been verified even to the present day.

In the XIXth century, however,

official surveys of Novaya Zemlia and the Kara Sea were of a more important character.

After a few unimportant expeditions by Russian naval officers, from 1806 to 1838, we come to the year 1859. In this year a Russian merchant, Sidoroff, revives the idea of the possibility of establishing a Kara Sea trade route from Europe to Siberia. With a view to encourage new efforts for this enterprise, Sidoroff offered to pay considerable premiums for the development of trade with Siberia *via* the river Yenissey. His appeal was responded to by Mr. Murchison, President of the London Geographical Society, at whose instance a syndicate was formed in London for sending out a vessel to the Yenissey to load graphite. But the attempt failed in consequence of the unsatisfactory result of the inquiries made by the agent of the syndicate, who was sent out in advance. In 1860 and 1862, Sidoroff's invitation was accepted by Lieutenant Krusenstern, who sailed from the river Petchora in the schooner "Ermak," and accompanied by the lugger "Embrio," reached the Yugor Strait, where, however, the vessels were drifted

asunder by the ice and parted company. The "Embrio" returned alone to the Petchora, and the "Ermak" drifted in the end into the Kara Sea and was there crushed by the ice. Krusenstern managed to reach the Yalmal shore across the ice on sledges, after suffering great hardships, and thence with the assistance of some Esquimaux he made his way to Obdorsk, on the Ob. In 1863 Sidoroff despatched a schooner, which he had built on the Ob, to the mouth of the Taza, where she safely arrived in about a month. In the same year Sidoroff formed a company to work the opening of the passage to the Ob and Yenisey, for which he obtained certain concessions and privileges from the Government. In 1868, the Norwegians, under Karlsen, successfully carried on a trade through the Kara Sea with the West Coast of Novaya Zemlia.

His countryman, Johansen, following in his wake, was similarly successful in reaching Beloy (White) Island. Johansen was followed by the Englishman Palliser, who likewise made a successful and profitable voyage to the same island. In 1870, the same Johansen, encouraged by the Stockholm Academy of Science, repeated

his former exploit, and returned laden with considerable material results by the north coast of Novaya Zemlia, for which voyage he received the Stockholm Royal Academy's Gold Medal.

In the following year several Norwegian expeditions were made to the Kara Sea. Amongst others the schooner "North Star" rounded Novaya Zemlia, and not only met no ice on its return voyage but discovered a current of water at a temperature of 5° to 6° cent. In the two succeeding years the navigation in these seas was not successful. Tobezen's ship was crushed by the ice, and the Austrian expedition under Paier and Wejprecht was driven by the ice far away out of its course to the north-west.

The years 1874 and 1875 disclosed a new era in Northern Sea navigation. Two new factors appeared on the scene: Capt. Wiggins, the Englishman, and Professor Nordenschildt, and it is to the enterprise of these two famous explorers that we are indebted for the final solution of the problem concerning the practicability and utility of the sea route trade navigation to Siberia.

Capt. Wiggins answered Sidoroff's

advertisement of the offer of a premium of £2,000, and having received a favourable reply, sailed in the "Diane," a steamer of 200 tons register, and made a thoroughly successful voyage from Dundee to a further point in the Kara Sea than any of his predecessors had done. *— by F. J. Anderson*

In 1875, Professor Nordenschedt, in his sailing ship "Pröven," completed the first successful voyage to the mouth of the Yenissey and back to Norway. This he repeated the following year in the steamer "Tromsö," making the voyage there and back in twenty days. The same year Capt. Wiggins, in the steamer "Thames," having reached the mouth of the Yenissey, entered the river, and with the assistance of local pilots and his own lead soundings, made his way up a distance of 1,000 versts to the mouth of the river Kureyka and delivered the first cargo of English goods seen there. In 1877, having wintered at the mouth of the Kureyka, Captain Wiggins returned with a cargo of graphite down the Yenissey, but, through the ignorance of the local pilots, the ship ran on to a sand bank and had to be abandoned and sold on the spot. In the same year (1877) Shoanenberg

made a voyage from the Yenissey to Vardöe in a ship called the "Morning Star," constructed out of a river barge, and delivered some salvage goods from the "North Star," Sidoroff's schooner, which was wrecked on its first voyage in its attempt to enter the sea from the Yenissey. This year brought also the steamer "Fraser," of 300 tons, chartered by Sidoroff from Bremen, to the Goltshiha (an island at the mouth of the Ob), followed by Trapeznikoff's "Louisa," which was the first steamer from Europe to reach Tobolsk by the Ob.

The year 1879 is noted for several expeditions into Siberian waters. Among these was Nordenschildt's famous voyage in the "Vega" along the whole northern coast of Asia. Knoop, a Moscow merchant, made the first attempt to deliver a cargo from St. Petersburg to Siberia by sea. He chartered a steamer called the "Louisa" at Kronstadt for the Yenissey, and a river boat, the "Moscvá," at Yenisseysk to deliver Siberian goods to the "Louisa" at the mouth of the Yenissey for her return voyage. The latter vessel was wrecked off the coast of Norway, and her cargo was trans-shipped to the

steamship "Tsaritsa," which arrived safely at the place of meeting and exchanged cargoes with the "Moscvá" and returned to Norway, whilst the latter brought the imported cargo safely to Yenisseysk.

The mouth of the Ob was visited about this time by the following steamers: "The Neptune," a Danish steamer of 400 tons register and 13 ft. draft, which encountered difficulties and delay in taking in her cargo at the loading berth (*Lendenzi* point, an unsheltered open place on the east bank of the river Nadina), but returned safely with it to Hamburg. The "Warkworth," an English steamer of 500 tons and 12ft. 6in. draft, on crossing the bar had to jettison 6,000 poods of wheat and a portion of the rest of her cargo, got back safely to London. Both ships were chartered by Siberian merchants for export cargoes. Then followed the schooner "Sibir," built by Trapeznikoff, in Siberia, and the "Louisa" belonging to the same owner. They both grounded at the mouth of the Ob on their way out with general cargoes to Europe. The "Louisa" was crushed by the ice, but the "Sibir" arrived safely

in London. In 1878, the "Lena," one of the steamers belonging to Nordenschildt's expedition, with the "Vega," reached the mouth of the Lena and made their way up the river as far as Yakutsk, thereby proving the navigableness of these waters. But this new venture, as far as at present known, was not followed up by other navigators, probably on account of the sparse population of the place and the consequent very limited demand for foreign goods. These successful attempts of 1877-1878 induced several other speculators to organize expeditions in 1879. A few vessels were chartered by Russian merchants and despatched in the same direction from London. But of these only one ship arrived in the Yennissey, the rest, alarmed at the large quantity of ice they met at the gates of the Kara Sea, beat a retreat. Of the three sailing schooners belonging to Trapeznikoff that got out of the Ob with immense difficulty on account of their over-draft (11—13 ft.), not one succeeded in getting through to Europe, whilst two of them were crushed by the ice. In 1880 very few steamers were chartered in England; two of them turned back, whilst

one, the "Neptune," was the only one that year that reached the mouth of the Yennissey and returned to Hamburg in safety. In the same year the well-known enterprising Siberian capitalist Siberiakoff sailed in his steamer "Oscar Dickson" from Vardö to the Yennissey, but through an unfortunate blunder of the captain they entered the bay of the Guidana instead of the mouth of the Yenissey, where they ran aground, and although the ship was one day lifted off by the ice, they had to winter there. The following year the "Oscar Dickson" grounded again in attempting to get away, and this time had to be abandoned, whilst her companion schooner "Norland" was drifted away by the ice and became a total wreck. Knoop's steamer, the "Louisa," in the same year, made the voyage from Hammerfest to the Yenissey and back, whilst her companion, the "Dalman," under the same charter, had to winter in Yenisseysk. In 1882, three steamers arrived in Siberian waters: one was Knoop's "Louisa," and the other two were of the Danish and Dutch polar expeditions, sent out to erect international polar stations. Of these the "Louisa"

alone returned to Europe. The "Difna," of the Danish expedition, had to winter in the Kara Sea, and after drifting about in the ice got away only in the following autumn. The "Varna," belonging to the Dutch expedition, was crushed by the ice off the Yalmal peninsula. In 1883, Knoop's "Louisa" and Sibiriakoff's "Nordenschildt" again visited the Kara Sea, but in the end the "Louisa" had to assist the latter and tow her back with a broken propeller. In 1884, the "Nordenschildt" sailed again from the river Petchora, but had to return before making the Yugorsky Strait with damage to her machinery. In 1885 and 1886 there were no expeditions to the Kara Sea.

The Kara Sea navigators in the space between 1877 and 1886, and subsequent years, may be divided into two periods. The first period, 1876 to 1886, contains incidents of material support contributed by the enterprise of certain Russian merchants. Sidoroff alone expended near 1,700,000 roubles on his ventures in this direction. The second period, from 1887 to the present day, is taken up exclusively by foreign, *i.e.*, English enterprise. In the ~~last~~ ^{first} period the total number

of steamers despatched from Europe to the Ob and Yenisey was 27, of which 12 reached their destination; the rest failed, some of them becoming total wrecks. Seven steamers sailed from the Yenisey and Ob, five of which failed in their attempt, and two only succeeded in completing their voyage. It is worthy of remark that of the 20 vessels which failed, only one had to return on account of the ice in the Kara Sea, the rest had to put back either through damage to machinery or through want of experience of their captains. The serious losses entailed by these frequent failures had the effect of crushing further Russian enterprise and the navigation of the Kara Sea, accordingly in the latter part of the period from 1887 to the present time, is prosecuted exclusively under the personal directions of Captain Wiggins (in 1897 the fleet of steamers that sailed from London was navigated without the aid of Captain Wiggins), and with English capital alone.

II.

THE OPENING OF TRADE INTERCOURSE BY THE WIGGINS-POPHAM ENTERPRISE.

IN 1876 the first consignment of English goods was brought by sea into the river Yenissey; in 1877 two steamers with foreign goods from Europe reached the Ob and Yenissey. In the years 1877 and 1878, the Imperial Government granted concessions for free of duty import of all foreign goods by the rivers Ob and Yenissey, with the exception of manufactures, tea, spirits, malt liquors, cigars, and sugar. Subsequently by Imperial Decrees of the 15th July, 1879, 18th April, 1880, 2nd March, 1881, 2nd June, 1882, and 7th October, 1883, the Ministry of Finance was authorised to admit during the navigations 1879-1885, certain articles free of duty to the mouths of the Ob, Yenissey, and Lena, in certain limited quantities to be approved at the discretion of the Minister of Finance. The following articles were accordingly made free of duty, viz.: paraffin, olive oil, machinery, shipbuilding material and stores, agricul-

tural implements, iron, steel, and earthenware, musical instruments, jewellery, dried and preserved fruit, spices, drugs and chemicals. Through the intervention of Moscow manufacturers however, supported by the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, the following articles were debarred from free duty of import, viz.: foreign sugar, ready-made clothes, cloth and woollen material, linens, caustic soda, alkali, glass (plate and glass ware), spirits, wine, alcohol, malt liquor, tobacco, cigars, tea, patent medicines, lithograph stones, books and other publications.

In 1887 a company, *The Phoenix Merchant Adventurers*, was promoted at the instance of Captain Wiggins. Mr. Sullivan, the manager of the Company, and Captain Wiggins, obtained a concession from the Ministry of Finance, dated 6th October, 1887, for the free of duty import of all goods into the rivers Ob and Yenisey in that year. Under this concession the above-named Company imported that year the following articles into Siberia, viz.: 10,000 poods salt, 249 grinding stones, 326 poods anchors and chains, 150 poods paints, and 111 poods paraffin, total about 11,000 poods. Thus it was this Company

who first introduced paraffin light into the Yenissey district. Up to that time, a lamp of any kind in that part of Siberia was an article of great rarity, used only as a special ornament to decorate the room in well-to-do households. Paraffin oil was the special prerogative of the very rich classes, and is the same even to the present day. The ordinary householder has to content himself with a tallow dip of local manufacture, or with the fat of animals, such as the bear, seal, etc., for all lighting purposes.

The very satisfactory result of this expedition, when the steamer "Phoenix" with a cargo of English goods worked her way 2,000 versts up the Yenissey to the town of Yenisseysk, prompted the Company to seek another concession from the Russian Government for a much longer period, and with a special permit for the "Phoenix" to unload and load at Yenisseysk instead of at the mouth of the river. The application was ardently supported by Sir Robert Morrier, Her Majesty's Ambassador at the Court of St. Petersburg, who looked upon this proposed extension of English trade with Russia not only as an interesting commercial

venture and speculation, but as an excellent opportunity for promoting a closer relationship between two mighty Empires, by opening a sea-route which had, up to that time, been practically closed to the world.

About this time Siberiakoff was also negotiating with the Government for a *porto-franco* concession for himself for a period of five years. Accordingly, an Imperial Rescript, dated 21st May, 1888, authorised the Ministry of Finance to grant a special permission for the free admission of foreign imports to the Yenissey during the navigations of 1888 to 1892 inclusive, and to the Ob during 1888 on previously granted terms and conditions. Galtshiha, an island at the mouth of the Yenissey, was the place appointed for customs inspection and the unloading of steamers. All vessels bound for Siberia had to forward copies of Manifests of their cargoes to the Ministries of Finance and of Trade and Agriculture, and if the cargo consisted of goods the nature or quantity of which was considered detrimental to the interests of the Russian manufactories, the free admission of such goods was to be prohibited, or by special permit of the Minister they might

be allowed to pass in certain defined quantities. It was soon found, however, that the Customs clearance of ships at Goltshiha, an almost uninhabited place, at so late a season of the year (September) entailed great delay, and was serious risk for the foreign steamers to run as well as to the river craft, anxious to return before the close of the river navigation by ice. Mr. Sullivan therefore petitioned the Minister of Finance to authorise the Customs Authorities to affix their seals only on the cargo as it was being lightered at Galtshiha ; the regular clearance to take place at Yenisseysk. In his petition Mr. Sullivan pointed out also the great inconvenience of Galtshiha as a discharging berth, and begged that it might be exchanged for the Karaoul Point or some other safer and more convenient place. This was acceded to by an order of the Ministry of Finance dated 12th July, 1888. "The Phœnix" had leave to navigate the Yenisey during 1888, but at the same time the Minister expressed a wish that the "Phœnix should" be sold thereafter into Russian hands, and that no consignment of foreign goods should be brought to Goltshiha, where there were to

be no more Customs officers to attend to the clearance.

In 1890, at the request of the English merchants, the British ambassador made an application to the Russian Government for an extension of the concessions which were to expire in 1892, for a further period of two years, *i e.*, to 1894 inclusive, in view of the fact that certain unforeseen difficulties, and impediments in the navigation had prevented the company from reaping any advantages from the concessions during the first two years (1888 and 1889) of their operations. This request was accordingly granted by an Imperial Rescript dated 28th December, 1890. Encouraged by the success attending the voyage of the "Phoenix" in 1887, the *Phoenix Merchant Adventurers* in the following year despatched the steamer "Labrador" with a cargo of 15,800 poods for Yenisseysk. The steamer passed through the Kara Sea and arrived safely at Goltshiha, but in consequence of the late arrival of the river-boat which had to exchange cargoes with her, the "Labrador" was compelled to return with her inward cargo undelivered. A similar misfortune happened in 1889. The same ship, with

a cargo of 3,500 poods arrived again all right at Goltshiha, but being unacquainted with the channel, the captain declined to proceed further up the river to meet the river-boat, which had got within 250 versts of Goltshiha, but was prevented by a succession of gales from reaching the anchorage of the English steamer. The latter was compelled in the end to land her cargo at Goltshiha and return to England empty. These continuous misfortunes at last brought the *Phoenix Merchant Adventurers* to a liquidation in the same year. But in spite of this, a new company, the *Anglo-Siberian Co.*, sprung up at once, and a fleet of three steamers was despatched the following year (1890) to the mouth of the Yenissey with a total consignment of 30,800 poods*. This was all safely discharged into the river-craft in Lookovoy strait, and return cargoes consisting of grain and timber taken in by the three steamers. The whole of this consignment reached Yenisseysk safely, and part of it for-

* Consisting of 13,200 poods of metal, metallic ware and machinery; 3,500 poods of paraffin; 3,200 poods of salt; 1,100 poods cordage; 1,100 poods olive oil; 800 poods cement; and sundry packages of other goods.

warded on to Krasnoyarsk, and part to Irkutsk. In consequence, however, of the total ignorance of the English of the local demands, a large quantity of this consignment, consisting chiefly of costly and unsaleable articles, remained on hand, and eventually had to be retailed at a very heavy loss. Unfortunately, the Company entered into this venture not only without any acquaintance with Siberia and the requirements of the local inhabitants, but absolutely without anyone in their employ knowing the language. Finally the Company found it impossible to recoup their heavy losses, and like the previous one, was compelled to liquidate.

In 1891 and 1892 there were no attempts made at this trade. In 1893 the Great Siberian Railway Committee gave Captain Wiggins an order for the delivery at Goltshiha of about 90,000 poods of foreign made rails. The whole of these rails were safely brought to Goltshiha in the steamer "Orestes," but, unfortunately, the barges for receiving them were of such an inferior class that they could not withstand the severe gales blowing at the time of unloading, and a quantity of the

rails went down with the barges, and were not recovered till the following year. The risk of going higher up the river to a more sheltered discharging berth was too great for a steamer with a draft of 27 ft., as the channel was unknown to anyone, and the marine insurance was effected as far as Goltshiha only. The deep channel, seven fathoms and upwards, extending from the latter place to the Lookovoy strait, a comparatively safe and convenient loading berth, was discovered only in 1894 by the Hydrographic Expedition under Colonel Velkitsky, who verified many discrepancies in the then existing charts of the locality. For example, the West coast of the river Ob bay was discovered to be situated 30 miles west of the point actually marked in the Russian Official Charts.

The risks attending the delivery of rails for the Great Siberian Railway by this sea route were considered too great, and further attempts were accordingly abandoned. By the same steamers that delivered the above-mentioned shipments of rails a complete set of gold-mining machinery and appliances, of about 10,000 poods weight in all, was received by a firm

of Siberian mine proprietors. In 1894 Captain Wiggins received from the Committee of the Great Siberian Railway an order for the delivery by the Kara Sea to Yenissey of two steam tugs built in England for the river Angara. These were safely conveyed to the Lookovoy strait and delivered to the Railway authorities, who came down the river in the steamer "Lieutenant Maligin." The following goods were brought with the tugs and duly trans-shipped into river-craft for delivery at Yenisseysk, viz., 1,198 poods herrings, 183 poods rice, 176 poods preserved fruit, and 56 poods preserved meat, etc.; total, 2,650 poods. The English steamer "Stiernen," carrying coal for the two tugs, got aground in the Yenissey in a fog on her return journey, and was damaged to such an extent by the ice that in the following spring she became a total wreck. The wreck of this steamer, which was not insured, inflicted severe pecuniary loss to the Wiggins Siberian Expedition, which was fitted out principally for the delivery of rails in 1893 and of the tugs in 1894. The chief promoter of this expedition was Mr. Francis Leyborne Popham. The Company

did not liquidate, however, but set to work at once, and in 1895, having no consignment for the Great Siberian Railway, found another cargo for their steamer, and delivered it safely at Yenisseysk.

At this stage we purpose taking the opportunity of a short digression in order to introduce Mr. Popham, who is at present taking such an important part in the struggle to promote a closer relationship between England and Russia by means of establishing a new route of commercial intercourse. He is not a mere commercial adventurer or trader—he is a wealthy English gentleman and a keen sportsman, the owner of several yachts fitted out specially to navigate different seas; and an ardent amateur competitor in various naval competitions. Among his yachts he possessed one that was particularly suited for navigating the Arctic Seas, which he was anxious to visit himself, having already sailed in many other latitudes. At this time Nansen's expedition to the North Pole was being fitted out, and a vessel was required to take out stores, etc., for this expedition to a depôt which it was proposed to build at Port Dickson, on the

North East Islands. Popham offered his services which were accepted, and at the suggestion of Captain Wiggins, he undertook at the same time the delivery of the rails for the Great Siberian Railway to the mouth of the Yenissey. Two years of successful navigation in these seas aroused his interest in the Siberian trade. Being an enterprising Englishman, the loss of the "Stiernen" appeared only to sharpen his appetite for further venture. Thus he is now still as keen as ever in prosecuting his aim and object, which is to establish a regular line of steamers from London and Newcastle to the Yenissey, and up that river as far as Kusnoyorsk, where he has established a depôt for machinery and for the sale of various goods imported by him (whisky, malt liquors, preserved fruit and meats, cutlery, plated goods, toilet soap, cosmetics, etc.). Thanks to the machinery imported by Mr. Popham, many Siberian mines and saw-mills are now in working order.

In 1895, the English syndicate headed by Mr. Popham, again applied for a further extension of the concessions for trading to the mouths of the Siberian rivers, on the grounds that trade by this sea-route with

Siberia could not be regularly maintained without support from the Imperial Government. Their request was granted by a decree of the Minister of Finance, dated 15th March, 1896, authorising free trade for a period of three years, *i.e.*, to 1899, with the former limitations as to quantity for certain imports. In the same year (1896), R. M. Moir, Mr. Popham's agent, petitioned the Ministry of Finance for the free admission of brick tea, sugar, and wine, which were till then subject to duty. The Government, in consideration of the exceptional difficulty and heavy outlay in the Kara Sea trade route, as well as the very heavy import duty existing on tea by what is termed the *European Tariff*, agreed to admit brick tea on the *Irkutsk Tariff* (at 2.50 in gold per pood), leaving sugar and wine subject to the *European* scale. Other imports were to remain free of duty with the aforesaid stipulation. The success which followed this arrangement of the English firm led the Yeniseysk merchant Tonkonogov to apply in 1896 for permission to import on the same conditions, from Hankau *via* London during the navigation of 1897, 200 packages of ordinary loose and 1,000 packages of

brick tea. The Government agreed to this by permit dated 18th November, 1896, and the tea was duly delivered at Yeneseysk. At the same time, a shipment of 15,000 poods of rails was allowed to pass duty free for the Olekminsky Gold Mines, belonging to the Lena Gold Mining Co. In December of the same year permission was granted to two Russian merchants, Feinberg and Pomus, as well as to Mr. Popham's agent, for a term until the revision of the tea duty, to import by sea to Siberia every kind of tea, subject to the *Irkutsk* Tariff and on the same scale as tea imported *viâ* Mongolia and Kiahta by the river Amoor and by the Semipalatinsk Customs system. This last concession was withdrawn, however, on the 8th March, 1897, because the Moscow merchants found it more to their advantage to send their leaf teas from China to Siberia *viâ* the Kara Sea instead of *viâ* Odessa. Indeed the difference in time alone was an immense saving: the London-Kara Sea route took about five weeks; the Odessa route seven weeks; the Mongolian overland about 18 months. Moreover, Mr. Popham offered to deliver tea from London, *via* the Kara Sea, to the mouth of the Ob in

18 days, at a rate of freight of Rs. 1.40 per pood direct to Tumen or Tomsk, and of Rs. 1.10 per pood to Yenisseysk. The rate of insurance was six to eight per cent.

In the period 1887-1888, in all 22 steamers were despatched from England to the mouth of the Yenisey, 19 of which were successful in reaching their destination, whilst only three failed.

No attempt at navigation for trade purposes to the Ob were made in 1888-1896, because probably the concessions granted did not affect the class of goods chiefly in demand there.

The statistics of the trade intercourse by this route do not show a very brilliant result on the whole, but at the same time the figures may be worthy of consideration, mainly because in the latter periods they represent a remarkable improvement in exports. The total weight for the years 1887-1897 amounted to 395,559 poods, distributed as follows:—

<i>Year.</i>		<i>Poods.</i>	<i>Year.</i>		<i>Poods.</i>
1887	...	11,500	1894	...	2,650
1889	...	1,475	1895	...	18,145
1890	...	30,800	1896	...	38,821
1893	...	100,000	1897	...	192,168

According to the Customs returns for the same period the total amount of duties paid was over Rs. 98,000.

The imports consisted of the following:— salt, grindstones, paint, chains, paraffin, metals, metalware, machinery, cordage, olive oil, cement, preserved fruit and meats. iron, steel, chemicals, stearine candles, black pepper, sardines, resin, soda, rice, tea.

Of these, the articles considered of primary necessity for the population are as follows, viz. :—Salt, 12,740 poods ; paraffin, 5,611 poods ; candles, 3,205 poods ; iron and iron-ware, 35,000 poods ; machinery and accessories, 3,000 poods ; brick tea, in 1897 only, 154,388 poods.

With regard to the export trade several attempts were made to promote it during the same period though with not very important results. In 1890 the total value on this head (chiefly cereals) was Rs. 7,760. In 1893, the arrival of the steamer into the Yenisey with rails for the Great Siberian Railway, induced Tsheromnoeh, a Yenisey merchant, to forward about 18,000 pood graphite to Goltshiha, at the mouth of the Yenisey for shipment to England, together with a parcel of timber. The

stormy weather which prevented the safe delivery of the rails from the English steamer also prevented the latter from taking in this cargo, and the whole of it had to be landed on the spot. Tsheromnoeh died the following year, and further attempt in this direction ceased. In 1897, the Siberian corn merchants were able to ship by the comparatively large convoy of English steamers which arrived that year at the two rivers a total of about 180,000 poods of wheat, at 16 cop. per pood, delivered at the bay of Nahodka. The following raw products were at the same time shipped for consignment to England, viz.: about 341 poods graphite, 364 poods wool, 425 oxen horns, 6 poods bear skins, 30½ poods horse-hair, 2,000 poods hemp, and 81 pieces sawn timber. The whole of this shipment found a very favourable market in England, and the hemp in particular met with a brisk demand and was disposed of at profitable prices.

In the face of the above-mentioned facts it is hardly possible to doubt that the foreign trade navigation with Siberia is still only in its infancy; that this intercourse has led so far only to a mutual introduction, and a partial acquaintance with

each other's articles of commerce, and that the navigation itself and the shipping business in particular are as yet in an experimental condition.

The navigation of the Kara Sea in its present undeveloped condition can hardly be considered ordinarily safe and regular. Scarcely anyone, with the exception perhaps of Capt. Wiggins, is adequately acquainted with navigation of the entire route. Neither foreign captains nor Russian pilots know anything definite about the periods and the various characteristics of the movements of the ice-floes in the Kara Sea, the soundings of the channels, and the approaches to the rivers Ob and Yenissey. On the contrary, some of them have displayed a lamentable want of acquaintance with the topography of the local bays and gulfs, as was observed in the case of the steamship "Oscar Dickson," belonging to Siberiakoff. The captain, instead of making for the entrance of the Yenissey, took the wrong course and got into the Guidana Bay, which is considerably more north, and to the east of the mouth of the Yenissey.

But, in addition to the fact that the route is very little known, another great draw-

back is the very limited period it is open for navigation, and the consequent risks to be taken into account of having to winter in Siberia. This contingency entails the necessity of taking an extra supply of coal, stores, and clothing for each ship, which, of course, means a double outlay as well as a certain loss of cargo room. The first expeditions used to take with them a whole year's supply of coal; later on half-a-year's supply was considered enough; but since the route has become better known a three month's stock is the usual provision. If the ships are not detained by having to wait for the opening of ice-closed straits and channels, and the Kara Sea is fairly free of ice, the ships enter the latter at once, and in three to four days reach the mouths of the Ob and Yenisey. This happens, however, only during southerly and south-westerly winds, which drive the ice to the north. When northerly and north-easterly winds prevail the Kara Sea is often packed with ice-floes, and the ships have either to wait for an opening or to pick their way amongst the floating ice, or as a last resort they can avoid the ice by a *detour* sometimes right into the Baydārat Bay, thence steering northward

they thread their way along the desert shores of the Yalmal peninsula. Besides these impediments the following drawbacks have to be borne in mind, viz., the want of reliable charts; the prevalence of fogs, sometimes lasting for days and even weeks; the absence of lighthouses and beacons or of any landmarks whatever along the Yalmal coast, White Island, etc.; the uniform flat shape of the land along the entire sea route with no points for orientation; the entire absence of safe shelter for ships and of depôts of coal and provisions; a very sparse and nomadic population. All these considerations indirectly point to the conclusion that without Government aid in the shape of concessions for at least a definite period of years this route can hardly become the desired reliable channel for the development of the trade and the resources of Siberia.

III.

THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF SIBERIA.

AS LONG as the Kara Sea trade with Siberia was only of a tentative character, the free of duty admission of goods was not likely to create any cause for alarm. But when this trade route became generally known, when it assumed proportions which threatened to become in the near future a serious rival to the Mongolian tea trade route, and when at last the imports brought by foreign ships threatened to assume considerable dimensions, the Minister of Finance came to the conclusion that the time had arrived when the question regarding the conditions for further free admission of foreign goods by this route into Siberia should be submitted to a full enquiry.

A Consultative Committee of the Department of Trade and Manufacture was therefore appointed early in June, 1897, to assemble at the Ministry of Finance.

The Report of the Committee, which

was approved by the Minister of Finance, was as follows :—

“(1.) That during the navigation of 1897 the import of foreign goods to the mouths of the rivers Ob and Yenisey, by way of the Kara Sea (with the exception of the following articles: patent medicines, lithographic stones, books and other publications, the importation of which should be prohibited), be permitted on conditions hitherto in force, viz.: sugar (raw and manufactured), tobacco, matches, wines and spirits, tea (excepting brick tea), manufactured goods, linens, cloths and woollen manufactures, and soda, were to be subject to duty on the *European Tariff* scale; brick tea on the *Irkutsk Tariff*; and all other articles to be free of duty, subject only to a special permit to be obtained for each voyage from the Ministers of Finance and of Agriculture and Imperial Domains.

“(2.) That the mercantile communities interested therein be at once informed, through the medium of the different Exchange Committees, that beginning with the navigation of

1898, the *European Customs Tariff* will be applied to all foreign sea imported goods to Siberia, with the exception only of salt and coal, which shall be under the same regulation as at the port of Archangel. No duty to be levied on machinery and mining appliances necessary for the gold-mining industry of Siberia. The quantity of each consignment of the latter to be regulated at the discretion of the Ministers of Finance and of Agriculture and Imperial domains.

“(3.) The Department of Collectors of Customs to be instructed to prepare the necessary measures for the collection of duties in the navigation of 1898, at the mouths of the Siberian rivers, and for the prevention of smuggling.

“(4.) That the Commissioners of Excise be instructed to delegate a staff of Excise officers to the mouths of the Ob and Yenissey, to inspect ships, and to collect the duty on all such imports arriving there during the navigation of 1897 as require the special permit of exemption.”

This sweeping measure of the Ministry

of Finance aroused a series of grave comments from the trading community interested, as well as from the Russian periodical press. The majority declared that if the Government had any intention at all of encouraging and facilitating the export of the cheap raw products of Siberia, it should sanction the extension, at any rate for a few years longer, of the existing concessions which had already been promised to remain in force to the end of 1899.

On the other hand it was contended that some of the articles imported into Western Siberia, under these concessions, had found their way to the other side of the Oural Mountains into central European Russia, and in spite of their long transit, were able to compete keenly with the same class of imports which had entered Russia by the western frontier on the *European Tariff* scale. A competition which had the effect of raising amongst the European-Russian merchants, serious apprehensions with regard to the future prospects of their trade. The Russian manufacturers and the Moscow merchants in particular, who had until then carried on a monopoly for themselves in the whole

Siberian trade, saw in this competition a threatening danger of being supplanted by the foreign supply of goods to their customers at a cheaper and better quality.

In order to be in a position to approach the subject of the merits of this sea-route trade impartially from both sides of the controversy, it is necessary to divide it into two distinct propositions, resolving themselves into two questions, a proper elucidation of which should lead to a practical solution, at any rate with regard to Eastern Siberia, since Western Siberia (with few exceptions applicable perhaps to her Northern limits) might, with a certain degree of latitude, be considered to have entered into the pale of universal Russian culture. To the first question may be assigned the general wants and economic condition of the population of Eastern Siberia. The second question is—What is Siberia, particularly its Eastern part, in a position to offer the foreigner in exchange for the goods he imports? The solution of the second question is of material importance, since under the present conditions of the Kara Sea trade the importation of foreign goods into Siberia is essentially dependent upon the

certainty of obtaining a return cargo from Siberia. The risks and the high rates of freight and insurance on ships and cargo attending this trade would otherwise leave no commensurate return.

The three regions of Eastern Siberia, the Irkutsk, Yeniseysk, and trans-Baykal provinces, which would be affected by the importation of foreign goods by the river Yenisey, occupy an area of 3,394,466 square versts, equal in extent to that of several European countries joined together. The grand total of their population is only 1,798,705, with an average varying considerably for each province. The trans-Baykal province has 1.3, the Irkutsk 0.8, the Yenisey 0.3 inhabitants per square verst. The Yenisey province, according to these figures, is consequently the least populated, and is also the most northerly and the most unproductive. If its southern division—the Minousinsky district, which possesses all the elements of an agricultural country, and which is 13,405 square versts in extent, with a population of 150,000, be considered a more or less civilized portion of the province, then on the other hand there is the Tourouhansky district of 1,932,400

square versts, which is but a vast *tayga* (open country and forest land), with a scanty population of 5,721 inhabitants, consisting of half-civilized nomadic tribes of various castes. The distribution of the population of this district is about one per 500 square versts. Yet this district occupies superficially about 90 per cent. of the entire province. The *toundras* (waste-lands), such as the Great and Little Abamskoy, Nisovskoy, and Tazovskoy, are inhabited by nomads: Ostiaks, Samoyeds, Uraks, and Dolgans, who live an impossible life. The single administrative centre is the town of Tourouhansk of 131 inhabitants and 27 houses, the removal of which to a more convenient locality has been decided upon by the Administration, and for which the necessary steps have already been taken. The whole district is governed by a kind of bailiff, constituting in himself both administrative and judicial functions, for the jurisdictional reforms of Russia have not yet penetrated into these regions.

Epidemics are constantly carrying off the inhabitants; continual plagues devastate the herds of reindeer—the natives' chief means of support. The economic

life of the whole country is chiefly dependent on the reindeer, on fish, and on feather game, which is gradually becoming more difficult to procure without gun-powder and shot. The most flagrant exploitation and shameless demoralization of the natives by inducing them to drink, are the chief characteristics of the local trade. Mr. Koulakoff, who was sent by the Governor-General of Irkutsk to the Yenissey valley on the question of the removal of the town of Tourouhansk, says in his report: "Sometimes a boat-load of fresh caught fish is sold by the natives for a man's cap, a pound of sugar, or a brick of tea." This is not surprising, since the current price of a brick of tea* is from Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 2 in the town, and considerably more in the *tayga*; a pound of sugar costs from 35 to 50 kopecks, whilst paraffin is scarcely to be obtained even at a very high price.

There have been times when rye flour, costing 10 kops a pood at Minousinck has been sold at 80 kops. to R. 1 in

*The weight of a brick of tea (tea dust made into a hard flat cake of the appearance of chocolate) is about 2½ lbs.

Yenisseysk and Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 2 at Tourouhansk.

In the *tayga* there are localities where rye cannot be purchased under Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 per pood ! Yet both Yenisseysk and Tourouhansk are situated on the same river—the Yenissey. With the necessities of life at such fabulous prices, sometimes even beyond the price of money, with numerous calamities visiting the native population without medical and veterinary aid, frequently without even administrative assistance (there is one bailiff to 1,932,000 versts) which might at any rate save them at times from a hungering death. Such evils must inevitably result in a wretched condition of life for the people. An eye-witness, who visited the Ostiaks in the bad harvest year of Siberia (1895), says that he frequently came upon people absolutely naked, huddled together close to an embering fire in their wretched wigwams, with the stamp of hunger on their sunken faces. In some parts of the *tayga* this lamentable condition of the people is almost universal. "At the present time," writes bailiff Petroff in his official report, "the greater portion of the Tazovsky Ostiaks are squatting on the

banks of the small rivers, either crowded together in large holes dug in the earth or huddled in a heap in their wigwams, naked and famine-stricken ! ”

In such a hopeless state of destitution, is it surprising that cases of cannibalism should not unfrequently take place and be on the increase to such an extent that natives from other districts are afraid to approach the neighbourhood of the Tazovsky station ? Another official, in his letter to the Mayor of Yenisseysk in 1894, states that he has entries in his books of twenty cases of cannibalism from famine in the Tazovsky district alone since the year 1800, *i.e.*, within the present century. The high price of common necessities of life increases as one proceeds further East and North-east of the Yenissey province, and in Yakutsk at length reaches fabulous figures. Unfortunately the navigation of the river Lena—though apparently quite practicable, as has been shown above—remains still more or less a problem for solution in the future. At the present time, the almost total absence of human beings, and the consequent impossibility of procuring the ordinary comforts of life, is a serious

impediment to the proper administration of the whole district. It is an extremely difficult matter to find officials willing to serve in such localities, even at increased pay. The wholesale flight of the stipendary magistrates within a very short time of their appointment, and of the entire court on circuit, on the introduction of judiciary reforms, is a vivid illustration of the impossibility of introducing and maintaining proper administrative machinery in these depopulated remote parts of the Empire. Of course there are many different causes for this sad state of things in the Yenisey and other provinces of Siberia. Chief among these are the topographic and climatic conditions, the great lack of population, and the total absence of ordinary means of communication. At the same time it must be admitted that what is considered indispensable for the existence of average mankind, are, under existing circumstances, at a cost beyond the reach of these impoverished Siberian people.

These necessities cannot come to them from the East, from the mouth of the Amour, nor from the South from Mongolia and China; neither can they come from

the West, on account of the immense distance of railway transit. Neither can the Great Siberian Railway help them from the direction it is intended to take. A glance at the map of Siberia will show that this *single* line of railway cuts Western Siberia into two equal parts, and on entering Eastern Siberia deviates towards the South, leaving the entire Northern and Central regions out of its sphere of influence, even with an allowance of 200 versts on each side of the track as a margin for its influence.

Therefore for a long time to come, until the introduction of numerous long branch lines, Eastern Siberia and its predominant centres will remain almost entirely dependent upon their own resources. Under such circumstances the eyes of the better class and more enlightened portion of the Siberian population are naturally looking with considerable interest to the chances of development of the Sea route trade. This route alone is in a position to supply the Eastern Siberians with the necessary commodities for the ordinary comforts of life by bringing imports from Europe to the mouths of the rivers Yenissey and Lena, and thence into the heart of Eastern

Siberia by the two great arteries, which exceed in length and extent of navigable water that of the largest rivers in European Russia. These two important trade arteries and their tributaries are, however, only partially explored yet ; their channels are unknown. The Angara alone, thanks mainly to the tea-trade navigation, has been included in the list for exploration by the Ministry of Means of Communication. That the river network formed by the systems of the Yenissey and Lena, embracing almost the whole of Eastern Siberia, is likely to prove of immense importance to the future trade of the country, is a fact illustrated by experiments which have been made from time to time, merely by way of sporting excursions by Siberian tradesmen. Thus, in 1896, one of these explorers having descended the river Lena, hauled his boat and a small barge across the headland, 18 versts in width, between the latter river and the Lower Toungouska, a tributary of the Yenissey, came down the latter, and entering the Yenissey made his way to the town of Yenisseysk. His return journey he performed by going up the Angara and its tributary the Illima, then crossing

another headland between the Illima and the Lena, returned home by the latter river. Such an excursion is certainly possible, yet it is not known to the authorities, and suggests the idea of the utility of cutting a canal across the headland to unite these two great river systems—the Yenisey and Lena,—which are capable of providing the means for the wholesale distribution of imports brought by the Kara Sea to almost the extreme confines of Eastern Siberia.

We have already observed that the carriage of goods by the sea route is possible and practicable, but that in consequence of the many drawbacks connected with this route, its development can be maintained only if certain facilities be provided for the export of local products, which are now lying idle for want of capital and men to prospect the resources of the country and develop the local trade of these regions.

Let us, therefore, examine what advantage this part of Siberia can offer to capitalists prepared to take up the import trade. Without taking into account the prospective wealth of the country dependent on further explorations and the

enormous natural resources known to be hidden under its surface, we will merely point out such articles of raw produce that are already in circulation, and which now form the chief commodities of its trade and commerce.

Chief and foremost amongst these is the gold industry. The almost total exhaustion of alluvial gold supply in Siberia generally, and in the northern and southern *taygas* in particular, has become a well-known fact. The old sources are being denuded ; fresh deposits of any importance are no more to be found ; for some time past the old beds in which the original rich deposits were found are being worked over with little or no results. Yet in the same *taygas* there exist extensive mines of gold quartz which the Siberians have made repeated attempts to reach with the use of primitive tools and manual labour, and each time have failed for the want of modern mining appliances. It is only practical, technical experience, combined with the use of proper machinery and chemicals (chlorination or cyanide processes), that can call forth to life the slumbering gold embryo secreted in the bowels of the earth. Such, in a great

measure, are the present undeveloped conditions of the whole Siberian gold mining industry.

Iron Ore of very good quality, containing from 60 to 80 % of pure iron, is to be found in the Minousinsky district. The cost of the ore at the takings is $3\frac{1}{2}$ kops. per pood. There is no doubt that a great many similar quarries of iron ore are to be found scattered over the whole of Siberia.

Graphite is a product capable in time of commanding a very extensive market on account of its importance for the metallurgical industry. Graphite mines have already been discovered in the valleys of some of the Yenissey tributaries—the Lower TOUNGouska, Bahta, Koureyka, and Phatianiha. As a rule the working of Siberian graphite is comparatively easy in view of its close proximity to the surface, and it has already been exported on more than one occasion to England. Several years ago Mr. Sidoroff, of whom mention has been made, offered to supply the first foreign ship to arrive at the mouth of the Yenissey with 10,000 poods of this material, and this naturally led to its existence in Siberia becoming widely known abroad. It cost Mr. Sidoroff 65 kopecks per pood

delivered at Yenisseysk. Another dealer, a Mr. Savelieff, worked some, and employed for this purpose labourers from the local inhabitants, and 10,500 poods was delivered at the village of Markova, 840 versts from Yenisseysk. The cost with carriage was at the rate of 25 kops. per pood per 40 to 50 versts, including the expense of cutting a new road for the purpose. Another instance of graphite enterprise which has already been mentioned, was that of the merchant Tsheromnich, who extracted some from the Lower TOUNGouska valley and floated it down the river to the village of Monastirskaya on the Yenissey, where some 18,000 poods are still lying awaiting shipment. There was also another case of some Kourey graphite having been brought to the surface about 120 versts above the river Kureyka, and forwarded thence on to Yenisseyka. There is conclusive evidence of the existence of graphite mines near the banks of the Podkamenoy TOUNGouska (a tributary of the Yenissey). At present we know of no considerable export of it taking place from Siberia, as it is being used locally for making crucibles by the Irkutsk Alluvial Gold Laboratory. In addition to

the above mentioned mines there are the famous Aliber mines in the Trans-Baykal region, consisting of graphite of a quality suitable for making the best Faber pencils. And yet in the years 1870-80 the Russian Government were paying Rs. 4.50 per pood for Ceylon graphite.

Coal has been discovered in the Noril hills, 120 versts below Dudinsk on the Yenissey, and is only awaiting means for working it (cheap machinery and demand). The good quality of this coal has been certified by Vilkitsky when fitting out his sea expedition. He gave an order for 20 to 25 thousand poods of coal to a local man named Timofey Ivanoff, who set to work at this coal-mine in 1896. Several hundreds of natives worked at it the whole winter, delivering it in sledges (the easiest means of transport in Siberia) to the ships in the Yenissey. One thousand reindeer were employed for sledging it at a cost of 15 to 20 kops. per pood; the cost of working out was 10 to 15 kops. Besides these coal-fields, there are some in the valleys of the Angora, Phatianiha, and lower down the Yenissey, near the village Baklianiha. All these natural storages of fuel are likely to

become in the near future mighty weapons for the industrial development of the country, the mineral mines in particular, as it is well-known that iron and copper ore exist in great quantities in the vicinity of the coal mines in this part of Siberia. This, however, will only come about when the proper modern appliances for the coal mines are brought into the country. The development of the coal industry is naturally entirely dependent on the supply of machinery, which can only be imported by the Kara Sea to the mouths of the two principal rivers, by ships that will thereby become also the first considerable consumers of Siberian coal. Under present rates of freightage coal can never become an article of import to Siberia. The cost of carriage from London to the mouth of the Yenissey is 70 kops. per pood, thence to the town of Yenisseysk the freight is Rs. 1.10 per pood. Consequently foreign coal could not be sold in the latter town under Rs. 1.80 per pood (£11 a ton), and at least twice that amount in the *tayga*.

Salt, for the same reason, could not become a paying article of import into the Yenissey province. The cost of

it at Yenisseysk would amount to about Rs. 1.20 per pood, whereas local salt is sold there at 80 kops.; and of course proportionately dearer in the *tayga*. Here the Tomsk salt is chiefly used, which is brought from the Tomsk salt works by the Ob-Yenisey canal, (between the river Ket, a tributary of the Ob, and the river Kass, flowing into the Yenisey). This salt is sold at the shipping place on the canal at 65 kops. per pood, and large quantities of it are sent on to the Touroushinsky district for fish-curing. There are also rock-salt quarries in the Yenisey region. Large deposits of pure rock-salt have been found at the mouth of the river Hatanga, but these cannot be utilised, as there are no roads for communication, and the 200 versts' distance thence to the *tayga* has to be covered by reindeer, with no food obtainable for the animals along the entire track.

The little river Solënaya, a tributary of the Heta, is entirely impregnated with salt, which settles down on to the river bed as the evaporation takes place.

Mica is found in the valleys of the rivers Angara, Lower Toungouska, and other branches of the Yenisey, in fairly

extensive beds. Sample shipments of this have on several occasions been made to England, but the results are not yet known.

Amber in considerable accumulation of small particles has not unfrequently been discovered along the courses of Siberian rivers.

With reference to animal matter, which may perhaps be classed, however, as a mineral, since it is found in the earth, mention may be made of *Mammoth Bone*, instances of the discovery of which are in no wise rare in these localities. About 250 to 300 poods are annually taken away out of the *tayga*. The average price on the spot is 25 kops. per pood for mixed quality, unassorted. The superior qualities, sorted, are valued in some cases as high as Rs. 400 per pood. The above-mentioned products are by no means the only buried treasures of this richly-endowed somnolent portion of the globe. Evidences of the existence of many others have been frequently observed. Among these are *Chrome Ore*, rising mountain high on the banks of the Yenisey some six versts below the Osipov rapids; *Alabaster*, in almost exhaustless quantities in and about

the same region, and several others, which are awaiting experienced explorers to bring them forth to the light of day.

The wealth of the vegetable and animal kingdom is even greater. Corn grown in the Minousinsky district alone might be measured by hundreds of thousands of poods, awaiting the chance of being exported. If an outlet for it be persistently denied by sea, it will eventually, on account of the rapid increase of agricultural immigration from European Russia and the consequent increase of the area of cultivated land in these districts, find its way to the other side of the Oural mountains, into the Eastern agricultural counties, and produce there a severe fall in the price of wheat, rye, and oats. An outlet into the sea, on the other hand, might be the means of creating a regular demand for it abroad, and so produce a healthy development of the agricultural industry in the whole of Siberia. Whereas at present the area of cultivation, instead of increasing, is very often purposely diminished after good harvest years, in consequence of the serious fall in prices. In prosperous years like these the corn is frequently in some places (the Kansky

district) not reaped at all, but is left to perish in the fields for want of a market for its disposal.

Amongst the articles of agricultural produce suitable for export purposes the following should not be overlooked : — *Spirits*, the price of which partially volatilized (40°) on the spot, is one rouble per *vedro* (2.70 gallons) out of bond. The average quantity at present annually distilled here is about 300,000 *vedros*. *Hemp*, cultivated in the districts of Minousinsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Yenisseysk. Local prices Rs. 2, Rs. 3, and up to Rs. 3.50 per pood. Present annual supply about 15,000 poods. *Rape Seed-oil*, annual supply about 10,000 poods. Price, Rs. 3.50 to Rs. 4 per pood. *Flax*, of an excellent quality. Dealers from Russia have lately began to buy fibre from the Russian colonists in the Tobolsk and Tomsk provinces, but they do not come as far as Eastern Siberia, where flax and codilla are cultivated as yet only for domestic purposes.

Turkey Rhubarb grows freely among the Krasnoyarsk hills. The islands of the Yenissey are many of them frequently covered with wild *Hops*.

Wood of a valuable resinous kind—yellow and white pine, cedar, larch, etc., virgin forests of which exist, might under proper management become a profitable commodity for export.

The local prices are as follows:—

Larch in balks, per 100 pcs.—

3 to 4 sajens by 5 to 9 vershoks...	Rs. 30.70
8 to 9 " " 9 to 12 " ...	Rs. 120
5 to 6 " " 5 to 10 " ...	Rs. 60 to 200
7 to 8 " " 7 to 8 " ..	Rs. 200

Yellow pine in balks, per 100 pcs.—Same dimensions.

Rs. 30 to 70, Rs. 120, Rs. 50 to 150, and Rs. 200

Sawn pine, per 100 pcs.

3 to 6 sajens by $\frac{3}{4}$ vershoksRs. 20 to 40

Yellow deals, per 100 pcs.—

3 to 6 sajens by 1 vershoksRs. 30 to 60

Logs, 3 to 5 sajens by $1\frac{1}{2}$ versh., per 100 pcs.—

<i>Larch</i>	Rs. 60 to 100
<i>Pine</i>	Rs. 80 to 100
<i>Pine</i> 3 to 4 sajens by 2 vershoks...	Rs. 70 to 80
<i>Larch</i> 3 to 4 " " 2 " ...	Rs. 80 to 100

Of sylvan products there are *Cedar Nuts*, present annual export 50,000 poods, price Rs. 2 and Rs. 2.20 per pood. *Nut Oil, Tar*,
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above 10,000 poods at 60 kops. Pitch, above 5,000 poods at 80 kops; *Turpentine*, etc. Then there is, of course, the large supply of wood for fuel consumed by the river boats, price Rs. 1 to 2.50 per saj.

The dairy and animal produce consists of *Common Butter* called *Siberian melted*, which has already become a noted article of export to Turkey even, and is prepared in the western provinces of Siberia, prices ranging from Rs. 7.50 to Rs. 8.50 per pood. *Tallow*, exported annually to 5,000 poods from Yenisseysk alone, at Rs. 3 to Rs. 4 per pood.

A judicious manipulation of the productions of the last named might be the means of eventually assisting in the development of local stearine candle manufacture. Up to the present time the few efforts that have been made in this direction by local firms, through the absence of wholesome foreign competition, and the severe exclusive monopoly of the home manufactories, have been thwarted and made ineffectual even in Western Siberia. Thus Ashurkov's candle factory was closed after a short struggling existence, having been purchased by the powerful monopolist firm of Krestovnikov,

of Kazan. The importation from England lately of 15,000 poods of stearine candles by the Kara Sea route was the first introduction of this kind of light to the people of the Yenissey province. The English importers were offering these candles for sale at Yenisseysk at Rs. 8.50 per pood, whereas up to this time Krestovnikov had been selling similar candles at Rs. 11 per pood. *Cow hides* are now being exported *vid* Tumen to European Russia at Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 per hide ; from the Krasnoyarsk and Minousinsk districts they could be supplied, if necessary, in quantities of several thousand hides annually. *Sheep and lamb skins*, averaging 90 kops. each can be had in very considerable quantities in the Minousinsky district. *Felt*, which is made from wool by the numerous nomadic tribes in the southern district of the province.

Horse hair and manes, the export of which has practically ceased in the Baltic ports, are sold here at Rs. 22 for the hair and Rs. 7 for the manes per pood.

Cattle horns and dry bones have already been exported with advantage from these parts to England.

Deer and Elk Hides, of which the present

supply is about 15,000 annually. Of the latter gauntlets are made and sent to the Tomsk and Irkutsk fairs. The deer hides are used for clothing the natives. Prices from Rs. 11 to Rs. 17.50 per hide, subject to the state of demand. The hair is extensively used for bed and furniture upholstery. Price, Rs. 1 to Rs. 2 per pood for cleaned and washed hair. Then, of course, there is the famous Siberian *Fur industry*, so abusively exploited by the reckless wholesale slaughter of valuable fur animals. The present annual average supply from the Yenissey province alone to the Nizhny-Novgorod and Irkutsk fairs for export abroad is as follows, viz., 1½ million of squirrel (1,000 pcs. to the 1½ pood), 10,000 sables (Rs. 3 and upwards per skin), 1,000 bear, 2,000 fox, 10,000 skunk. The regular opening of the Kara Sea route trade would be a great saving and economy of time and money for this branch of trade.

The rivers of Eastern Siberia abound in many rare varieties of fish, which might be preserved in tins for export, a local leading firm of Tobolsk has lately erected a factory for the manufacture of such tins, and is taking advantage of the

partial duty concessions granted this year by purchasing in London, for shipment to the Ob, *viâ* the Kara Sea, Sheet Tin and Olive Oil for preserving Fish, and Fishing Nets, thus combining three classes of industry in one organisation. One of the minor sources of a prospective prosperous condition of the country, and which might eventually become an article for export, is the enormous fish supply of the rivers of Eastern Siberia.

"Immense shoals of salmon were making their way with us up the stream, and they seemed to think so little of their long voyage from the sea—a thousand miles and more—which they had already made, and of the still longer one which lay before them, opposed by a strong adverse current, that in sheer exuberance of energy they kept leaping their whole length from the water as they went along. Lovers of the gentle craft could hardly wish for better fishing waters than those of the Amoor. On the banks beneath the cliffs of *Hubarovka*, anglers were always to be seen in the day time, and though provided only with rough home-made rods and lines, everyone who had been fishing for any length of time had a good basket of fish—pike, bream, carp, perch, with several other kinds of fish not found in British waters. Salmon, though usually caught by means of nets, are frequently taken by the angler with sunken bait; but fly-fishing in this part of the world appears to be unknown. Fish are so

abundant in the rivers that even dogs have learned to catch them, and in walking on the bank a native of the country is not at all surprised to find one of these canine fishers, dripping wet, and making a meal of a fine salmon which he has seized by the head and dragged out of the water." *

At present the only channel for the disposal of the fish is its limited consumption by the few natives living in the vicinity of the rivers, as it constitutes their staple food. On the occasion of large catches the fish is frequently left in heaps to perish on the banks of the rivers for want of means of distribution in the district, and of fish-curing substances and appliances. This fact has been testified by Mr. Koulakoff, who was himself an eye-witness, and reported the same in his letter to the Governor of Irkutsk in 1896. Dr. Wenyon, in his book above quoted, says that the skins of fish are used to mend the huts of some of the natives as well as to make their clothes; and this is why these people have received the name of "Fish-skin Tartars," known to the Chinese by the name "Yā-pi-ta-tsz." The dried fish-skin is first crumpled up

* *Across Siberia.* CHARLES WENYON, M.D., London, 1896.

by the hands into a ball, then rolled and pounded in a sort of wooden mortar, and when it has acquired the necessary suppleness it is sewn together and made up into trousers, tunics, aprons, and shoes, the soles of the latter being usually strengthened by a piece of reindeer hide.

Among the many varieties of fish caught here is the famous Russian sturgeon, with its Caviar and Isinglass supply. Cod Liver Oil is plentiful, and is sold at Rs. 4 per pood on the spot. Best Belouga Isinglass fetches 60-70 kops. per pound. The Seal, Walrus, and Porpoise catches are also of some importance. The latter are very numerous, entering the rivers in large shoals in pursuit of small fish, into the upper reaches. The blubber of the Porpoise, 3 to 8 pounds per fish, is sold at Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 per pood; the hide is used for making reindeer harness and straps of a softer nature than ordinary leather, and better able to resist the Arctic frost.

The great natural resources of Siberia have lately attracted the notice of the outside world, and, in spite of the uncertainty and doubt attached to the opening

and maintenance of the Kara Sea route, European firms have made it their business to obtain a personal acquaintance of these regions with a view to direct trading. The *St. Petersburg Trade and Industry Gazette* (No. 28, 1898), taking its information from the *Siberian Messenger*, states that Russian merchants from Archangel, where the forests are being to a considerable extent denuded, had arrived in the interior of the Yenissey province with the intention of organising measures for the regular export of timber growing there, by the Kara Sea route. The same authority, quoting the *Sibirskaya Zhisn* informs its readers that representatives of the Elberfeld house of Ferd, Esser, & Co., and of the Hamburgh firm of Goldschals had passed through Tomsk on their way to Eastern Siberia, with the intention of establishing branch offices there for the sale of Iron, Salt, Spelter, Preserved Fruit, and Meats imported from abroad, and for the export of Grain and other raw produce by the Kara Sea. *The Novoeti* (No. 51, 1898) contains an announcement that members of three London firms had visited Minousinsk in order to enter into

direct trade with the local fur dealers, and for the purchase principally of Sable Skins. On the occasion of their first visit, it is said, they bought only Rs. 12,000 worth of these skins, at prices varying from Rs. 16 to Rs. 57 each. They had, however, given an order forward for upwards of Rs. 40,000 worth of skins. The local tradesmen are highly gratified at this new development of direct intercourse with foreigners, a circumstance which will relieve them from the hitherto existing necessity of taking their goods to the Siberian Fairs centres, as it were, on consignment, without knowing beforehand what they were going to realize: a contingency which is sometimes followed by very severe losses on their sales, as was the case at the Irbit fair of this year (1898) when the prices realized there for Siberian furs did not actually cover the buying prices from first hand.

IV.

THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE AT THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, JANUARY, 1898.

THE Order of the Ministry of Finance, which had the effect of destroying all hope of the expected extension of the period of the *porto franco* concessions for goods entering by the Kara Sea after the current year (1898),¹ determined the Siberian merchants to make vigorous joint efforts to approach the Government with a petition to rescind the order. The anticipated development of the sea-route trade by means of the concessions granted previously, had encouraged the Siberian merchants to look forward cheerfully to a happy realization of their long cherished idea of a direct opening to foreign markets, for the disposal of their surplus stocks of raw produce. Unfortunately these efforts, through certain personal motives, apparently, were not unanimously supported by all the principal Siberian towns. Some of the merchants, amongst whom were Municipal representatives (the Mayor of Krasnoyarsk) preferred the old system of trade and easy

monopoly, *viâ* European Russia, fearing an "overwhelming influx" of foreign goods into their country by the free-of-duty channels of the Ob and Yenissey, and the inevitable dislocation thereby of the old routine with its unexciting monopoly of excessive prices and small returns. In spite of the protest of the Mayor, the Town Council of Krasnoyarsk, by a majority of 17 votes to 6, passed a resolution to unite with the municipalities of Tomsk, Yenisseysk and Tumen, in petitioning the Government for an extension of the period of the concessions.

A Consultative Committee was appointed by the Minister of Finance early in January of the present year, to confer with representatives from the three chief towns of Siberia on the one side, and deputies from the manufacturers and merchants of Moscow on the other, on the question of granting concessions on imports *viâ* Siberian rivers. M. Kovalevsky, Director of the Department of Trade and Manufacture, presided, and the following various representatives took part in the deliberations:—Messrs. Belustin, Director of Customs; D. Th. Kobeko and N. P. Zaboutin, both Members of the Council

of Ministry of Finance; M. Soransky, representing the Ministry of Agriculture and Imperial Domains; Admiral Makaroff; the Mayors of Tomsk, Tumen, and Yenisseysk; and deputies representing various branches of industrial and mercantile establishments: total 45 persons.

The views and objects of the Siberians were clearly and systematically set forth in separate memorials, presented by the three above-mentioned towns to the Special Committee, which had been appointed by the Minister of Finance to meet at the Department of Trade and Manufactures, to receive evidence and deliberate upon the question of the free trade Sea route and its probable consequences to the industry of the Empire.

The Tomsk memorandum submitted the following propositions, viz.:

- (1) To admit duty free for a further period of five years the following articles imported *via* the Kara Sea route: Machinery for Siberian gold works and for agricultural purposes, and parts of machines to an unlimited extent, and machines for equipping Siberian mills and workshops;

- (2) To reduce the duties on cast and sheet iron, steel, spelter, chemicals not manufactured in Russia, stearine candles, and brick tea ;
- (3) To repeal the duties on foreign-built ships imported into Russia.

These concessions would, in the opinion of the Tomsk Municipality, establish the average rate of freight from London, Hamburgh, Havre, etc., at 80 kops. per pood on goods of the first and second classes, and at 50 kops. for iron and steel castings. The return rate of freight on the raw produce of Siberia would then probably be reduced to 35 kops. per pood. The reduction of the duty on iron, according to the Tomsk people, was particularly desirable and important by this route, because at the present time iron that was bought at Irbit at Rs. 1.50 to 60 kops. was sold at Irkutsk at Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 per pood. Tin and solder for the manufacture of tin canisters, according to the Tomsk memoranda, should be subject to only half the duty imposed on these articles at present.

The experiment made by the English of bringing brick tea, transhipped in London from Hankow, *viâ* the Kara Sea,

resulted in a saving to the importer of Rs. 15 to Rs. 17 per crate (180 to 190 lbs. net weight), on the ordinary route *viâ* Mongolia and Kiachta, which meant an economy of Rs. 3.50 per pood on the cost, and a saving of more than 12 months in the time of delivery. The above-mentioned concessions would, in their opinion, develop and extend the grain shipping trade of Siberia, and enable exporters to dispose of at least 10,000,000 poods annually of every kind of grain, which is practically without a market at the present time. A fleet of ships of about 200,000 tons capacity, engaged for the grain trade, would lead to an economy for the exporters of about two-and-a-half million roubles on the freight alone. The area of cultivated land in the Tomsk province for corn, has been increasing at a rapid pace since the peasant immigration from European Russia set in. The price of wheat in the collecting centres of Siberia has never exceeded 40-50 kops. per pood, as against 110-112 kops. of the price in Libau, and 126-130 kops. in London. Other articles of produce in Western Siberia, which, if exported, might find profitable markets abroad, such as :—oats, flour, spirits, rape

and linseed, 80-90 kops. per pood on the spot *versus* Rs. 3.80 in London; codilla, Rs. 2.20 per pood on the spot *versus* Rs. 3.80 in London; rape-seed oil, common butter, bristles and horsehair. In addition to the request for a reduction of the import duties, the Tomsk people petitioned for the construction of a commercial port in the Bay of Nahodka, and for the adoption of immediate measures for surveying and ascertaining the channel of the river Ob, which at present was practically unknown, for marking the channel with buoys, etc., and for preparing charts of the same. They also pointed out the desirability of having a commercial Exchange in one of the central towns of Siberia, for the general intercourse and centralization of trade; also the erection of a Meteorological and a Telegraph station on Novaya Zemlia.

The town of Tumen, in its petition, submitted that several million poods of grain brought from the surrounding corn growing districts of the province, and stored at Tumen, had to be frequently left to perish for the want of a demand and the means of transport to distant markets, in consequence of the high

railway tariff. The Municipality begged that facilities might be granted for the export of its grain produce abroad by extending the free trade concessions for another ten years, *viâ* the Kara Sea route, on the following articles, viz : Agricultural and every other kind of Machinery, Stearine Candles, Electric Machinery and appliances, Coal, Anthracite, Tanning Materials, Fire Bricks, Gas Fittings and Smoke Funnels, Steel and Iron Wire Rope, Chains, Anchors, Lead in pigs. Spelter, Resin, Pig and Sheet Iron. Tumen is the main source of the river system of the whole of Western Siberia, and the centre of the river steam-boat navigation. In its waters more than 100 steam and 300 sailing ships and barges are employed for the traffic of goods, the gross amount of value of this industry exceeds 16 million roubles. It has been very seriously crippled by the construction of the Great Siberian Railway, but the opening of the Kara Sea route would tend to revive it by offering employment for the great river traffic which would certainly follow, and bring almost incalculable benefit to the whole of this part of Siberia. It would, more-

over, remove the present great depression in agriculture, the chief industry of this part of the country. The steam-boat owners submitted that if a Custom-house for the Kara Sea navigation be established it would be inconvenient to have it any farther north than Tumen, on account of the lateness in the year of the season for the arrival of foreign steamers at the mouth of the Ob (Aug., Sept.), and so near to the closing of the river navigation. A custom house at Tobolsk would necessitate leaving the imports to winter there, to be transported to their places of destination on sledges, which would involve an additional expense of carriage as well as serious risk by removing some class of goods long distances in the winter.

In their memorial the town of Yenisseysk prayed for the remission of the duties on all foreign imports, on account of the prevailing prohibitive local prices of all articles of primary necessity. The free import of machinery was required to remove the present moribund state of the gold mining industry, which had come to a dead-lock for the want of modern mining machinery; it was also wanted for the general fitting up and the erection of all

kinds of workshops and factories, which would promote the development of the industries of the country.

The free import of foreign built ships would tend to develop the indispensable river traffic on the Yenissey and Angara and their branches ; extend the means of intercourse and distribution of goods, and so unloosen the bonds that are at present hampering the trade of the entire province, as well as revive the fishing industry in the lower reaches of the Yenissey. In exchange for the free imports, the wealthy Minousinsky district alone could supply several million poods of grain, flax, hemp, tallow, skins, and other products that are practically of little value at present in this locality for the want of accessible markets. The Great Siberian Railway has not, and is not likely to supply the need for the want of sufficient rolling stock, and on account of the great expense in the carriage of large quantities of raw produce at such an enormous distance. The nearest convenient port of shipment since the construction of the Perm-Kotlass Railway —Archangel, would be out of reach even at the minimum rate of railway tariff, not only for the Baykal district, the centre of

the corn supply, but even for the southern, the nearest confines of the Yenissey province.

The deliberations of the Consultative Committee at the Department of Trade and Manufacture, elicited the opinions of the two rival parties of the Russian mercantile classes, one in favour of the free trade Kara Sea navigation and the other opposing it. Those representing the interest of the Central Russia section maintained that the opening of the Kara Sea free trade route should be dependent on the question whether it was to benefit the whole of Russia and not only Siberia alone. The interests of the Empire as a whole required, in their opinion, facilities for the export of her raw produce, and not for the increase of the import of foreign goods into the country. If the export of our raw produce, they asserted, is, as maintained by the other side, impracticable without importing foreign goods by the same route, and if this importation cannot be made without free trade concessions, then the requirements of the Siberians, as set forth by them, should be weighed in the scale together with the probable consequences that

would ensue to the industry of the whole Empire by granting the concessions demanded. These advocates maintained that Mr. Popham had already imported into Siberia considerably more goods than he had exported from the country. It was not therefore a question in reality for facilities for exporting Russian produce, but for bringing foreign goods into Siberia. This would not only tend to drive out Russian manufactures, but, by perculating into the markets of the Central countries of European Russia it would cripple the trade and industry there. An attempt of this kind had already been made in 1897, when consignments of black pepper and tins of sardines had found their way by the Kara Sea Route, *viâ* the Ob, to Moscow. These anticipations, they maintained, were perfectly rational, because the entire population of Siberia does not exceed $7\frac{1}{2}$ millions and the consumption, therefore, of foreign goods by the entire country cannot be a very important item of the national trade. Further, it is doubtful whether Siberia is really in a position to supply any very considerable proportion of grain for export by the sea-route, the

quantity available for export at the present time, say 5—6 million poods, is an insignificant item for the Great Siberian Railway to deal with (both figures and deductions are contradicted by the actual surplus storage of grain of the present year, 1898). The English, the opposition deputies declared, do not want our exports; they have discovered a lucrative trade for themselves and are only seeking to monopolise the Siberian market. A steamer of 800 tons register can be chartered in London on a time charter for £550 a month, including her own bunker coal, and the return voyage to the mouths of the Ob and Yenisey occupies three to three-and-a-half months. This would represent a net profit for Mr. Popham of 150-200 thousand roubles per steamer, in the face even of the very high rate of insurance paid at present, which by-the-by is gradually descending as the risks of the route are gradually diminishing through better acquaintance with the navigation. Originally the rates were 12-12½%; in 1896 the rates fell to 8%, and in 1897 they were as low as 4½ to 6% on goods. The rate of insurance for steamers is about 15½%, but this

of course will likewise be reduced in time. On the fall of the rates of insurance (Russian insurance offices have been doing some of the underwriting, reducing the rate to 3% already), the chartering rate for steamers will come down it is expected to £300 to £400, and steamers of 1,200 and 1,500 tons will eventually be taken up, which will result in colossal profits to the English. At present the rate of freight, London to Nahodka, is 25 kops. out and 20 kops. home, therefore, if the English ships were to come to the mouths of the Ob and Yenisey even in ballast the gain on the freight for example from St. Petersburg to London would not exceed 5 kops.* To reduce the duties or to take them off entirely would be tantamount to handing over the Siberian markets to the foreigner, not for three or five years only, as is suggested by the opposite party, but for an indefinite period. Besides, the duties now levied on some articles neces-

* The costs of carriage from London to Tumen are as follows: insurance on steamer, 800 tons reg., value 120 thousand roubles at 15% — 18,000 roubles; freight on three months charter, 15,000 roubles, total 33,000 roubles. Freight on cargo 100,000 poods (50,000 each way) at the rate of 33 kops. per pood to the mouth of the Ob and thence to Tumen, 20 kops. per pood.

sary for Siberia are not at all excessive ; for example, a costly article like *Cyanide of Potash* pays only Rs. 1.50 per pood, *dyeing barks* 12 kops., tropical fruit 60 kops, sulphur 2 kops. If Siberia is to have tariff concessions then why not grant the same privilege to other remote parts of the Empire, say Orenbourg, Perm, etc. Siberia, they tell us, is anxious to develop her industries, yet she has quantities of her own Iron which she should strive to work out and not agitate for the importation of foreign Iron. Dairy produce on the other hand is very scarce in Russia ; good tallow is not to be had, and we have to go to Australia for it. Formerly Siberia was without ways of communication, now she has two; the Great Siberian Railway and the Kara Sea Route. To place her, therefore, on more favourable conditions than other parts of the Empire, dislocating thereby our present tariff system, would, under the circumstances, be unjustifiable. Moreover why agitate for facilities to open new routes when within a very short period means will be provided to carry goods from Archangel, a nearer port to Europe, and a more accessible sea route, *via* the

Kotlass-Perm Railway to Tumen, and thence by the entire Siberian river system into the interior. Then we shall not see empty trucks along the line from Archangel, and the latter port will be in a position to greatly increase its shipping trade. The carriage from Tumen to the sea of *wheat* for instance, will cost then only 30 kops., this, with the freight from Archangel to London at 9-11 kops., will make the entire cost of delivery from Tumen to London only 39-41 kops. per pood. Under such an arrangement we might be able to erect profitable sugar refineries in Archangel to work up our Kiev and Odessa beet supply.

If the duties on imports entering by the Kara Sea Route were to be removed, the principal item of import would undoubtedly be brick tea, constituting as it does the chief article of consumption of the Siberian population, and of which a very considerable quantity is consumed there annually. The whole of the brick tea trade is at present in Russian hands and a very large capital is invested in it. If it be allowed to pass into foreign hands, the entire present business would be destroyed, because the present Mongolian

route, on account of the time occupied in transit (18 months), would not be able to compete with the Kara Sea Route, by which the tea can be delivered in Siberia within three months from Hankow. As for the dearness of primary necessities in Siberia, the chief cause of this is not the expense of cost of transport, but the peculiarity of the local trades which is to *corner* certain articles of constant demand, and the exploiting system of the bartering trade in vogue with the natives in Siberia. The advocates for withdrawing the concessions perceived, as will be observed in these attempts to introduce certain imports free of duty into Siberia a threatening danger which would upset the entire tariff and fiscal policy of the country. The advocates of the free trade movement, on the other hand, based their arguments chiefly on the existing privations of the population from the excessive high prices of articles of daily necessity. As an instance they quoted the facts that while the price of bread was 10 kops. a pood, a bottle of beer cost Rs. 1'50. They pleaded that such articles as salt (indispensable for fish curing) brick tea, sugar, in the eastern parts of Siberia,

such as the Yenisseysk province, frequently rose to prohibitive figures, and beyond the reach of the bulk of the population. That, irrespective of the costly long distance for transport, prices of all kinds of merchandise were increasing at present in consequence of the numerous middlemen engaged in the trade and through whose hands the goods had to pass before they could reach the consumer. There are many Russians living in Siberia who are reduced to a life of beggary to suit the interest of a handful of monopolists. The great Siberian Railway could not meet the requirements of the entire Siberian population, because the sphere of its influence could not affect the Northern regions of the country. The natural resources of Siberia were lying dormant under its surface for want of proper machinery, which would cost twice as much to make in Siberia than it does in European Russia, and steamboats for instance would be three times the cost of building them in Russia. The first traders to introduce into Siberia such indispensable articles as paraffin and stearine candles were the English; the first steamer to navigate the river between

Yenesseysk and Krasnoyarsk was also English, the "Dalman," purchased by a local steamboat owner. Without the open sea-route, the development of which has cost so many efforts, Siberia for a long time to come will remain in the dormant condition in which she is at present. It is a mistake to suppose, as some people do, that the sea-route has now become comparatively safe and absolutely accessible. This argument is entirely contradicted by the serious accidents that ships are always subject to in the Kara Sea by coming in contact with the ice; by the risk the enterprising navigator has to encounter of being compelled to winter on the inhospitable shores of the Kara Sea; by the absence of a thorough acquaintance with the channels of this sea and of the Siberian rivers; the extreme difficulty of crossing the bar of the Ob, on account of its shallowness, and that of the Yenissey, which is not known; the non-existence of any kind of fuel on the banks of these rivers involving a double supply of bunker coal for the ship's return voyage; the very high rate of insurance to be paid on ships (15½%, which on a vessel of 1500 tons means an

extra charge of 50 kops. per pood on the cargo); the want of correct and complete charts of the Kara Sea and of the Ob and Yenissey, (The surveys made by Velnitsky and Dobrotvorsky were merely preliminary attempts in this direction) as well as the total absence of beacons, buoys, and landmarks along the whole course. It is therefore premature to speak of the Kara Sea route as being an established thoroughfare. The mayor of Yenisseysk, Vostrotin, having in 1894 made the passage from Newcastle to Yenisseysk on board one of the ships that went out that year, speaks very emphatically of the difficulties of the navigation. Captain Wiggins was the only man competent on that occasion to navigate the ship, and a gale which arose on the passage from Vardoe to Novaya Zemlia threatened every minute to wreck the ship and all on board. The voyage occupied two months to the mouth of the Yenissey and four weeks up the river in a tug-boat which had accompanied the ship from England. There are no ship-building yards in the Yenissey regions and to bring a paddle boat by the Kara Sea from England would be almost impossible

as the paddles would be exposed to breakage even by the small packs of ice. The only means, therefore, of establishing even a goods and passenger river traffic, leaving out of account the sea navigation, is to admit foreign built steamboats free of duty into the country. With regard to encouraging the import of specific articles of commerce, it is perfectly obvious that a free admission should be granted to every commodity that is necessary for the weal and prosperity of the population, everything that is wanted for the development of gold-mining, iron and steel works, agriculture and the fishing industry. The free import of salt and coal is not of primary importance. Foreign salt could compete successfully with the local production only perhaps in the distant *taygas* of the Trouhansky district; whilst foreign coal could not even support the heavy freight which would have to be paid on it from England. Of special importance is the free admission of brick and leaf teas. At present the whole of the tea trade of Siberia is in the hands of a few firms—monopolists. The reason of this is the utter impossibility of working the business without the use of a very large capital.

A small investment with no turnover for a year-and-a-half, the time occupied by the tea transport by the Mongolian caravan route from China to Tumen would never pay. An opening on the other hand for dealing in small parcels of tea transhipped in England from Hankau would attract a number of small capitalists who would extend the business over a larger area and infuse new life into the trade by hurling a healthy and vigorous competition into the midst of the present independent *clique* of monopolists. This would have the effect of bringing down prices to a figure within the reach of the general consumer, thus an immense boon would be conferred upon the bulk of a deprived population. The present price at Krasnoyarsk of a crate of brick tea (containing 72 bricks and weighing 5 poods) by the Mongolian route, under the *Irkutsk tariff*, of Rs. 2.50 gold per pood for duty, is Rs. 65.79. The same quantity tea, *viâ* the Kara Sea, paying a duty of Rs. 5 gold per pood, as suggested by the opposite side, would cost Rs. 64.49 kops—a difference of Rs. 1.30 on the crate, and representing a profit

to the consignee of only 26 kops. a pood. If this suggestion should be adopted by the Committee it would become extremely doubtful whether the local tradesmen of Siberia will care to enter into the business at all or make any effort to assist in the development of the Kara Sea route. In spite of certain advantages derived by this route in point of economy in time, etc., too many risks and uncertainties are involved in it to make it popular under such conditions. The cost of carriage of brick tea from Irkutsk to Krasnoyarsk is at the present time Rs. 4.80 a crate by water along the river Angara, and Rs. 2.50 by rail. When the Great Siberian Railway is prolonged to Irkutsk and further on to the East, this long river route will probably be abandoned, since the cost of carriage by rail will no doubt be considerably reduced, and then there need be little apprehension of any serious competition by the Kara Sea route. The imposition of a duty of Rs. 5 gold per pood on brick tea imported by the Kara Sea route will undoubtedly lead to this that within less than three years the route will be absolutely lost to the tea trade and an article of the largest

consumption and of almost vital necessity to the prosperity of the whole of Siberia, will remain a luxury within reach of the wealthy classes only as it is at the present time. By the Mongolian route system we are paying the Chinese about three million roubles annually, a sum which would in time remain in our own pockets were the development of the Kara Sea route encouraged by the Government. A development, which under present conditions, would appear to meet with no particular difficulty of solution in the very near future.

The opinion expressed at the Congress by, what may be termed, the Independent Section, converged to the theory that it would be injudicious perhaps to dislocate the entire fiscal policy of the Empire by granting unreserved concessions to the Kara Sea importers. But in view of the remote position and of the lamentable economic condition of the Siberian regions referred to, it might be advisable to admit at least for a temporary period, say 5—7 years, certain imports free of duty by this route.

In addition to the free admission of Machinery and appliances for working the

gold mines and for agricultural purposes, which had already been conceded by the Government, certain other articles necessary for the development of Siberian industry might likewise be included in the concession, such for instance as machinery and appliances required for fitting up workshops and factories; agricultural implements, of which the peasantry is so seriously in want (scythes, sickles etc.); chemicals necessary for certain industries (Chlorides, Cyanide of Potash, Analine Dyes, Sulphur); Vegetable Dyes, Olive Oil, Tropical Fruit, Preserved Fruit and Meats, etc. In coming to these conclusions the Independent Section explained that they were guided mainly by similiar conditions which existed in the Southern provinces of the Empire, where foreign imported machinery and the employment of foreign engineers had certainly infused new life into the local industries.

Iron was produced in an inadequately limited quantity even in European Russia, therefore, some members of the Conference thought foreign iron might be admitted free of duty into Siberia, as well as Salt and Coal.

Finally, a certain small section at the

Conference were of opinion that a distinction might be made in granting the desired concessions between Western Siberia, which was more thickly inhabited by a population more socially developed and more enlightened generally, with a comparatively easy access to the Ourals. Eastern Siberia presented a striking contrast with its exceptionally sparse population deprived of the mere necessities of life and possessing no regular means of communication whilst so far removed from central Russia. For there was no doubt the greater part of the country was entirely cut off from the sphere of influence of the Trans Siberian Railway. The economic conditions of Western Siberia were certainly incomparably more favorable and such as would enable her to support a protective tariff like the rest of the Empire. Whereas Eastern Siberia not only required material for its industrial development but was absolutely in want of ordinary necessities of life and, therefore was entitled, in their opinion, to a grant of at least some of the concessions desired for a period of, say 5—7 years. The cost of maintaining a frontier Revenue guard between the two halves of Siberia would

not entail a greater outlay than the expense of establishing Custom house stations at the mouths of the Yenisey and along the northern coast of Siberia.

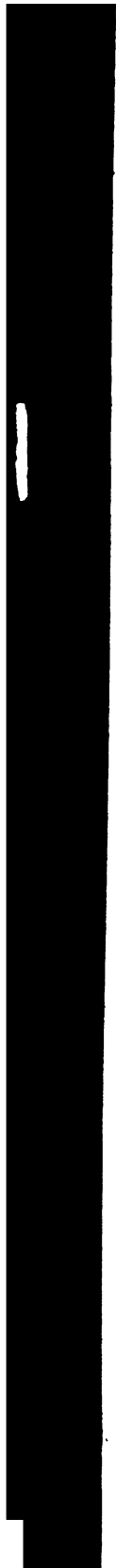
V.

RESULT OF CONFERENCE.

THE result of the conference was a decision of the Minister of Finance to admit a number of various imports free of duty, and to reduce the duties on certain others. These concessions, although temporary and experimental, yet constitute certain relaxations of the hard and fast tariff of 1891. Freedom from duty is granted for ten years from July 1st, 1898, on iron vessels for external navigation not imported in pieces, on steam yachts, dredgers, ice breakers for seaports, floating docks, chains, anchors, and wire cables for ocean-going ships and all vessels for service under the Russian flag on the Danube. A reduced duty of 20 roubles (gold) per ton of carrying capacity is to be charged on iron vessels for rivers and the Caspian Sea; also on tugs, barges and floating cranes for work at forts on the Russian Pacific coast; besides 3 roubles per square foot of boiler-heating surface in steamers of this category. The duty on wooden sea and river boats

imported whole is fixed at 8 roubles per ton, with the addition of the above mentioned boiler tax.

The following imports by sea *via* Siberian rivers are to be free of duty:—Machinery for Siberian gold works, salt, coal, agricultural machinery, and parts of machines, to an unlimited extent, machines for equipping Siberian mills and workshops, fishing nets and twine for the same, certain chemicals—but only in quantities actually required for preparing fish conserves; and sacks to the extent necessary for the actual export of grain. Duties of $4\frac{1}{2}$ roubles per pood on Ob and 4 roubles on Yenisey will be charged on brick tea, so that a Kiahta tea merchant, who pays only $2\frac{1}{2}$ roubles, will be protected and the overland trade preserved from ruin (!) The Minister has made the above exemptions for the current year, and hopes to have them prolonged for the next five years. All machinery for gold mining in Siberia is furthermore made free of duty on all the frontiers of the Empire. Duties are likewise repealed or reduced for five years from September 1st of this year (1898) on agricultural machinery. Steam ploughs, various kinds of threshing



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